

2nd to 5th October 2018

EUSARF 2018 PORTO

Foster Care Process: Challenges and Coping of Youth and Families

Wednesday, 3rd October @ 17:30: Poster Sessions & Coffee Break (Venue: Salão Nobre)

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Family foster care is a topic that currently gives rise to some interest, however, it still presents little research in the Portuguese context.

International research shows that the main challenges of foster families are related to the separation from the child and to reduced external support in financial, emotional, psychological, and social domains. To address these challenges, families have to put together coping strategies related to family resilience in the fostering process, such as: personality traits; family cohesion; family flexibility; self-esteem; skills in problem solving and communication and organization. Regarding the youth, there are few studies on the challenges faced by children and youth in foster care but also on adaptation strategies and protective factors that may help to circumvent them. Main challenges identified relate to withdrawal of the birth family and integration into the foster family. Perception of their relationship, both with the foster family and with the biological family, can be equally a challenge or a protective factor. Regarding to adaptation strategies, psychological resilience stands out.

Thus, this study intends to integrate the results of two complementary investigations, conducted as a part of two Master's Degree Dissertations. On the one hand, a study that aims to understand the challenges and the coping strategies throughout the foster care process in the perspective of the foster care youth, and, on the other hand, a study that intends to understand the challenges and coping strategies throughout the foster care process in the perspective of foster care families.

Both studies are still ongoing, in the data collection phase. Using a qualitative methodology, young people in a situation of family foster care and foster families are currently being interviewed, based on a semi-structured script. Both scripts include dimensions such as sociodemographic data, relationship between foster family and youth, challenges and coping strategies throughout the foster care process. The script for the foster families, also includes a dimension "motivations to foster".

Because it is still an ongoing study, we can not yet present any results. However, the data collection will be finished in the coming months and it is expected that the results can add to the investigation in the area of family foster care in Portugal. More specifically, because this study allows, on one hand, to understand perspectives of families and youth, and, on the other hand, to address their complementarity, since the same issues, in both perspectives, are addressed.